

Re-design of
Out of Home Care and Adoption Programs
Community Meeting
August 7, 2006
BMCW Region 2 Office
6111 N. Teutonia Ave.

The following questions were submitted by those in attendance:

1. Please explain what you mean by “attrition” regarding foster parents.

- A:** Attrition refers to the loss of available foster parents for various reasons, such as:
- Foster parents adopted a child and no longer want to foster.
 - Foster parents decide after some time that fostering is too difficult and choose not to continue.
 - Circumstances change in the foster home, such as divorce, move to another city, illness, or other family situation making it difficult to continue fostering.

2. If a current foster family of three children adopts one of the children, can they still continue to be foster parents?

- A:** Yes. Initially there may be a hold placed on the home during the adoption process so that no new foster children would be placed there. This is to allow the family time to adjust to the adoption. If there are foster children in the home at the time of the adoption, the family would be encouraged to continue to foster them to avoid disruption of their placement.

3. When recruiting foster parents will you recruit only for foster/adoptive parents? Or will you also be looking for parents who only want to adopt and parents who only want to do foster parenting?

- A:** There will be joint recruitment for both foster and adoptive parents. We are in need of both foster and adoptive resource families, but realize that some families are comfortable with fostering, while others want to only consider adoption. Soon after placement, we want to discuss the possibility of a foster child becoming an adoptee t. This will be done under the Permanency Consulting program.

4. What steps are being taken to reach cultural competency among foster parents, and are you considering faith-based options?

- A:** The BMCW considers cultural competency an extremely important qualification for all of our foster parents and staff. We are looking for ways to incorporate cultural issues into all of our training opportunities. Increasing the diversity of foster families is also a goal. This not only means ethnic diversity, but also diversity in lifestyle and socio-economic class.



BMCW and First Choice for Children have been actively working to engage faith organizations in identifying, recruiting, and supporting foster and adoptive parents.

- 5. Now that you are going to be dual licensing, are all foster parents going to be licensed at the same standard as adoptive parents? Currently their requirements are different. Will there be one set of standards for licensing for foster parents vs. foster/adoptive parents? Are the standards used in Milwaukee the same around the state?**

A: Foster parent licensing is done under Wisconsin Administrative Code HFS 56, with HFS 51 addressing the adoption home study process. While foster care looks at temporary care, adoption looks at long-term sustainability without the case management involvement of the State. The State recently approved a home study assessment that will be utilized for assessing both foster and adoptive families. BMCW will be utilizing this assessment and will go beyond the requirements of this assessment to be more diligent in areas like financial stability requirements and background checks.

Parents who are interested in adoption will be assessed for foster care and adoption at the same time through the dual licensing process. They will be identified as a resource for children in cases where the parental rights are likely to be terminated. The assessment of all foster homes, however, will include identifying barriers to adoption early on in an effort to develop a plan to mitigate these barriers while they are providing temporary care to foster children. If the barriers cannot be mitigated, children who have permanency goals of adoption would not be considered a good match for these caretakers. Families not identified as potential adoptive resources will still be able to foster, but will have children placed with them who are likely to be reunified with their family of origin.

- 6. Since not all foster parents want to adopt, and we want to limit the number of times we move children, how will you determine which children go to foster homes and which go to foster/adoptive homes?**

A: If a child is successfully integrating into a foster home and reunification with the birth parents does not take place, we encourage and assist the foster family in adopting the child if they are a willing and able resource. Most foster families do so as is evidenced currently in that in 75% to 80% of the cases where the parental rights are terminated the children are adopted by the foster parents who have been caring for them. Early assessment of the likelihood of reunification and beginning the discussion of permanency early on in placement will help us to identify the best match for the child.

- 7. What percentage of detained children are reunified? Of the percentage not returned, what percent are adopted?**

A: Seventy percent of the children who are detained are reunified with their family of origin within 12 months of detention. The remaining 30 percent may remain in out-of-home care with permanency plans in place for the future, move to a situation of legal guardianship, reach the age of majority (becoming independent), or be adopted.



Adoption figures by year and number of children are as follows:

2001	265
2002	504
2003	584
2004	560
2005	373
2006	139 (Jan.-June)

8. Will you be exploring training needs for stabilizing the birth families?

A: Two programs that are not part of this redesign effort work with the birth family are: Ongoing Case Management and Safety Services. (Children's Family and Community Partnerships serve Regions 1& 2 and La Causa, Inc. serves Region 3.) These programs provide an array of services to families, which include such things as drug/alcohol counseling, referral to economic support services, parenting classes, and many others. Case managers work with the family to ensure that the family can provide a safe, stable home environment.

9. Currently we have relative foster parent placement with elderly relatives who sometimes find it difficult to handle older children. Will they be given any kind of support to deal with these teenage issues to allow them to continue as care givers rather than give up?

A: The BMCW is aware of the high number of grandparents parenting both younger and teen children in cases open with the BMCW and also in the general population over which the BMCW has no authority. In families with open BMCW cases, we assess whether or not the relative is willing and able to take care of the child, evaluate the ability of relatives to meet the child's needs, and work to ensure the grandparent has resources for the child. We encourage all relative care givers for BMCW children to become licensed foster parents so that they can receive foster care payments and other services provided to foster parents. We also provide referral to community resources where these grandparents can get assistance.

10. Do you have any data about children who get reunified and how many of those children re-enter the system after they have been reunified?

A: The BMCW tracks children who re-enter out-of-home care within 12 months of being reunited with their parents. In the past three years, this has been 9% (2003), 6.7% (2004), and 7% (2005).

11. How do you deal with issues of children of color, especially if they are placed in homes that are not of their ethnicity? How do you help them deal with hair care and skin care issues?



- A: BMCW realizes the importance of placing children with families who understand the cultural backgrounds of children in their care. We seek families that are culturally competent, meaning that they understand the cultural background of the child, feel positive about it, and are willing and able to keep the child connected to that community. One aim of the redesign is to further incorporate issues of culture into both staff and foster/adoptive parent training. We also provide foster parents with a resource list of cultural activities and centers in the city. Recently, First Choice for Children contracted with a certified cosmetologist to provide assistance to foster parents on the care of hair and skin types. They are also provided with a packet of skin and hair care products.

We welcome community input on how we can assist cross-ethnic placements.

The following questions were addressed to Julie Brown of the Milwaukee Child Welfare Partnership Council who presented on their role in providing foster parent training under the redesign.

12. How do you plan to tap into outside resources for new ideas, solutions?

- A: BMCW's logo includes the statement "Partners in the Community." We work on many levels with a variety of government and non-governmental organizations and rely on them to provide us with insight, resources, and ideas. The Milwaukee Child Welfare Partnership Council and its many subcommittees is instrumental in identifying ways that all systems can work together to better serve the children in our community.

One very important source of ideas for improving foster parent training will be the Foster and Adoptive Family Training Advisory Council (FAPTAC). This Council will consist of community volunteers who will advise on all aspects of the foster and adoptive parent training program and identify community-based expertise that can be brought directly into the training program. We welcome not only the advice of FAPTAC members but their actual participation in training as their skills and interests allow.

In addition, we will be tapping other networks of expertise including that which exists at UW-M, the UW system generally, in the other Training Partnerships established at UW campuses around the state, and in the National Resource Centers established around the country to provide information and assistance from national experts.

13. Are you going to recruit for more trainers? If so, do you plan on getting trainers from community that have experience in the community? Someone who can relate to foster/adoptive parents?

- A: We plan on contracting with a range of knowledgeable and qualified trainers. We will look especially to the newly created Foster and Adoptive Family Training Advisory Council to identify, contact, and prepare such individuals.



14. What types of training will be offered to foster/adoptive parents?

A: There is general training that every foster/adoptive parent receives as part of the licensing process. There is also specific training to deal with issues that are common in foster/adoptive children, such as growing up with an addictive parent, dealing with sexualized behavior, and others. Training topics and opportunities are extensive, and we will continue to add to the menu as needs are identified.

15. How will you provide cross training to both staff and foster/adoptive parents and deal with transfer of learning?

A: An advantage of placing foster/adoptive parent training within the Milwaukee Child Welfare Partnership for Professional Development at UW-M is that it affords us the opportunity to link the training of staff with that of foster/adoptive families. The purpose of doing this is to facilitate greater teamwork in the interest of the children in care.

The UW-M Child Welfare Partnership for Professional Development is also committed to identifying and implementing follow-up consultation, coaching, and other strategies that will help families put the skills used in training into practice. Using a variety of methods, including the academic research resources of the University, the results of training will be evaluated and assessed.

16. Will you be working with former foster children who are now adults or parents who previously provided foster care or adoptive care to come back and share their vast experience to help give input and advice to your program?

A: We would welcome adults who were foster children or are adoptees and foster/adoptive parents into the preparation and delivery of training! We invite those who are interested in such a role to join the Foster and Adoptive Family Training Advisory Council. You can do so by contacting Julie Brown at brbrown@uwm.edu.